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BY ERIC
MACKAY



THE SONG OF THE FLAG.

THE
SONG OF THE FLAG

A National Ode

BY

ERIC MACKAY

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LONDON

Hamley & Co., Exhibition Road, S.W.

1893.

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THE SONG OF THE FLAG.



I.

Up with the country's flag!
And let the winds caress it, fold on fold,—
A stainless flag, and glorious to behold!
It is our honour's pledge;
It is the token of a truth sublime,
A thing to die for, and to wonder at,
When, on the shuddering edge
Of some great storm, it waves its woven joy,

Which no man shall destroy,
In shine or shower, in peace or battle-time.
Up with the flag!
The winds are wild to toss it, and to brag
Of England's high renown,—
And of the throne where Chivalry has sat
Acclaimed in bower and town
For England's high renown!—

And of these happy isles where men are free
And masters of the sea,
The million-mouthed sea,
That calls to us from shore to furthest shore—
That fought for us of yore,—
The thunder-throated, foam-frequented sea
That sounds the psalm of Victory evermore !

II.

For England's sake to-day,—
And for this flag of ours which, to the blast,
Unfurls, in proud array,
Its glittering width of splendour unsurpassed,—
For England's sake,
For our dear Sovereign's sake,—
We cry all shame on traitors, high and low,

Whose word let no man take,
Whose love let no man seek throughout the land,—
Traitors who strive, with most degenerate hand,
To bring about our country's overthrow!

III.

The sun reels up the sky, the mists are gone,
And overhead the lilting bird of dawn
Has spread, adoring-wise, as for a prayer,

Those wondrous wings of his,
Which never yet were symbols of despair !
It is the feathery foeman of the night
Who shakes adown the air
Song-scented trills and sunlit ecstacies.
Aye ! 'tis the lark, the chorister in gray,
Who sings hosannas to the lord of light,
And will not stint the measure of his lay

As hour to hour, and joy to joy, succeeds ;
For he's the morning-mirth of English meads,
And we who mark the moving of his wings,
We know how sweet the soil whereof he sings,—
How glad the grass, how green the summer's thrall,
How like a gracious garden the dear Land
That loves the ocean and the tossed-up sand
Whereof the wind has made a coronal ;

And how, in spring and summer, at sun-rise,
The birds fling out their raptures to the skies,
And have the grace of God upon them all.

IV.

Up with the flag!
Up, up, betimes, and proudly speak of it;
A lordly thing to see on tower and crag,
O'er which,—as eagles flit,

With eyes a-fire, and wings of phantasy,—
Our memories hang superb!
The foes we frown upon shall feel the curb
Of our full sway; and they shall shaméd be
Who wrong, with sword or pen,
The Code that keeps us free.
For there's no sight, in summer or in spring,
Like our great standard-pole,

When round about it ring
The cheers of Britons, bounden, heart and soul,
To deeds of duty, dear to Englishmen;
And he who serves it has a name to see
On Victory's muster-roll;
And he who loves it not, how vile is he!
For 'tis the Land's delight,—
Our ocean-wonder, blue and red and white;

Blue as the skies, and red as roses are,
And white as foam that flashed at Trafalgar;
The Land's delight!
The badge and test of right,
Girt with its glory like a guiding-star!

V.

The wind has roared in English many a time,
And foes have heard it on the frothy main,

In doom and danger and in battle-pain ;
And yet again may hear,
In many a sea-ward, sun-enamoured clime ;
For all the hearts of traitors ache with fear
When our great ships go forth, as heretofore,
Full-armed from the shore,—
And Boreas bounds exultant on the seas,
To bid the waves of these,—

The subject-waves of England and the Isles,—
Out-leap for miles and miles,
As loud as lions loosed on enemies!

VI.

Oh, may no mean surrender of the rights
Of our ancestral swords,
Which made our fathers pioneers and lords,
And victors in the fights,—

May no succession of the days and nights
Find us or ours at fault,
Or careless of our fame, our island-fame,
Our sea-begotten fame,—
And no true Briton halt
In his allegiance to the Victory-name
Which is the name we bow to in our thought,
Where English deeds are wrought,

In lands that love the langours of the sun,
And where the stars have sway,
And where the moon is marvelled at for hours !
The flags of nations are the ocean-flowers,
And ours the dearest, ours the brightest one,
That ever shimmered on the watery way
Which patriots call to mind
When they remember isles beyond the dawn

Where our sea-children dwell.
For there's no flag afloat upon the wind
Can wave so high, or show so fair a front,
Or gleam so proudly in the battle-brunt,
Or tell a tale of conquest half so well
As this we doat upon!

VII.

The storm is our ally, the raging sea

Is our adherent, and, to make us free,
A thousand times the full-tongued hurricane
Has bellowed forth its menace o'er the deep;
And when dissensions sleep,
When sleep the wrought-up rancours of the age
We shall again inscribe, and yet again,
On History's glowing page
The story of the flag,—

For 'twas our Nelson's flag
Which none in all the world shall put to shame,
Or vilify, or blame,—
The story of the glory of the flag
Which waved at Waterloo,
And was, from first to last, the symbol true
Of Wellington's pure fame!

VIII.

High, high the flag, for England's sake and ours,
Who know its vested powers,
And what it means, in war time, and in peace
When fierce dissensions cease,—
High, high the flag of England over all
Which nought but good befall!
High let it wave, in triumph, as a sign

Of Freedom's right divine,—
Its glorious folds out-fluttering in the gale,
Again to tell the tale
Of deeds heroic, wrought at Duty's call!
The wind's our trumpeter; and east and west,
And north and south, all day, as on a quest
Of mirth and marvel,—all the live-long day
It bears the news about

Of all we do and dare, in our degree,
And all the land's great shout,
And all the pomp and pageant of the Sea!





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By ERIC MACKAY

LONDON: LAMLEY & CO., EXHIBITION ROAD, S.W.

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